

## TESTIMONY FOR THE HOUSE MICHIGAN COMPETITIVENESS COMMITTEE

Opposition to House Bill 4148  
Wednesday, September 24, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Sue Idczak, PhD, RN, CNE and I am the Director of Nursing at Siena Heights University. I am also here on behalf of the Michigan Association of Colleges of Nursing (MACN), an organization that represents 21 of the state's four-year nursing programs, to express our opposition to House Bill 4148.

I would like to begin by thanking Chairman Shirkey and members of the House Competitiveness committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify and express concerns regarding House Bill 4148, as it pertains to nursing education.

As a nurse for 37 years; 19 in practice; 18 as a nurse educator – I am very qualified to address you on the topic of baccalaureate nursing education. I am the founding director and creator of the Bachelors' of Science in Nursing (BSN) program for Siena Heights University. Located in Adrian MI, Siena Heights offers a traditional baccalaureate program, and an RN to BSN degree completion program. Siena Heights has graduated 122 nurses from the RN to BSN degree completion program in four years, with another 58 RNs currently enrolled in coursework. Ninety seven percent (97%) of those Registered Nurses were educated in Michigan community colleges. All 180 Registered Nurses were already licensed and working in Michigan health care facilities when enrolled in Siena Heights RN to BSN completion program.

It is important for committee members to understand this legislation is not intended to increase the registered nursing (RN) workforce. While it is desirable for Michigan to have more Bachelor prepared registered nurses, it is not an accurate statement to suggest that this legislation would, in any way, impact a future nursing shortage, nor would it serve as a solution to the bottleneck that exists in nursing education today. In fact, if signed into law, it would only exacerbate the problems that face our existing nursing programs by creating unnecessary duplication, worsen existing nursing faculty shortages and the lack of clinical placement availability, and increase educational costs for taxpayers and students, alike. **BSN completion programs do not produce new nurses into the workforce.**

Proponents of this legislation argue that student access from associate degree nursing programs into bachelor degree nursing programs is non-existent. This is simply untrue. There are currently **66 nursing programs in Michigan** that offer either a bachelor's in science in nursing (BSN) or an associate's degree in nursing (ADN). **30 of those nursing programs offer a traditional Bachelor's of Science in Nursing, and approximately 20 of those programs offer an RN to BSN completion program. RN to BSN degree completion programs are offered in classrooms, in hospital settings, or on-line through distance learning and most of the programs are currently under-enrolled and under capacity.** You could be an associate degree prepared registered nurse (RN)

living and working in Roscommon, Alpena, Livonia, Jackson, Dearborn or anywhere else in the state and enroll into one of multiple Michigan universities' online or traditional classroom BSN completion programs.

According to the Michigan Center for Nursing, community colleges and universities alike, turn down applicants for nursing school because of 1) insufficient funding, 2) limited clinical space, and 3) the shortage of qualified nursing faculty. In fact, a recent survey released by the Center stated **associate degree nursing programs in Michigan turned away 52% of qualified nursing school applicants during 2009-2010 academic years**. If community colleges cannot address the current barriers in their existing nursing programs, wouldn't offering new programs only exacerbate the problem? Waiting lists at most of the state's community colleges are commonplace, with some reporting more than 1,000 students waiting for access to nursing programs. The Michigan Community College Association has reaffirmed that nursing programs at community colleges turn away qualified applicants because of insufficient classroom and clinical faculty, as well as clinical infrastructure.

We are all acutely aware of the current fiscal crisis facing the State of Michigan. Nursing schools in Michigan are already faced with limited resources- due to budget cuts and restraints. During recent years, community colleges and universities alike have taken deep cuts. Key programs such as nursing scholarships and the Michigan Nursing Corps have been eliminated by the legislature, reducing funds for nursing programs and student support in our state.

A previous House Fiscal analysis of similar legislation that included nursing highlighted the financial impact of allowing community colleges to offer bachelor degrees, and stated the legislation would increase operating costs of community colleges that offer bachelor degree programs. These additional costs include salaries and benefits for additional faculty, staff and administration, information technology, acquiring national professional nursing accreditation, and other support services. As a point of reference, nursing accreditation expense is costly and requires dedicated time and resources. The two national nursing accreditation bodies are the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

According to previous reports published by the Michigan Community College Association, all 28 community colleges have nursing programs. In every case, that program is either the most costly or nearly the most costly program and must be subsidized by other instructional programs. The MCCA report actually cited that the larger the nursing program, the greater the financial loss to the college. Furthermore, the single greatest factor in the high cost of nursing programs at the community college level is the cost of faculty. According to a 2008 published report by the Voorhees Group, which surveyed Michigan's community colleges on their interest to offer bachelor's degrees, 17 of the 21 community colleges that responded had an interest to offer a Bachelor's degree in Nursing. Other areas of interest in offering bachelor's degrees included other health-related degrees, business-related fields, manufacturing technologies, education, criminal justice and construction.

Secondly, there is a **growing shortage of qualified faculty** which directly limits the ability for nursing schools in Michigan to expand. In 2008, the Michigan State Board of Nursing approved nearly 150 nursing faculty qualification waiver exceptions - meaning faculty who lacked required preparation and credentials. Most of these waivers submitted to the board of nursing were from community colleges. The Michigan State Board of Nursing still approves approximately 100 waivers annually. Just as our population is aging, our nursing faculty is aging as well. 41% of full-time nursing faculty in Michigan are 56 yrs. or older, and 17% of nursing faculty are expected to retire in the next five years. The greatest shortage is in nursing education, where faculty must have advanced degrees to teach, and hold either a Master's in Science in Nursing or a PhD. Community colleges have stated a barrier is the decreasing number of advanced level nurses are available to teach; also claiming "community colleges don't have the funding to hire these nurses to teach".

As Director of Nursing at Siena Heights University, let me share our faculty story over the last six years. I have hired ten Masters of Science in Nursing prepared faculty and two PhD nurse faculty. The Masters of Science in Nursing faculty included seven new Nurse Educators, one MSN new to academe after 15 years in practice as a Nurse Practitioner, and two seasoned MSN faculty. The two PhD nurse faculty – one retired at age 68 after three years of service and the other PhD faculty member chose to leave after one semester to teach in graduate nursing program. Two MSN faculty members left for higher pay at a much larger university. Of the last seven hires at Siena Nursing, no PhD or doctorally prepared nurses applied for the open faculty positions. The learning curve has been steep in preparing and implementing courses as novice educators to assure success for faculty and for student learning outcomes. The nursing faculty shortage is real in Michigan. Siena Nursing's story is not unique.

Lastly, nursing schools in Michigan and across the nation are competing for limited clinical educational sites, and nursing preceptors. The Michigan Board of Nursing mandates a 10 to 1 student to faculty ratio. The Michigan Community College Association asserts one drawback to community colleges expanding their current associate nursing programs is due to lack of clinical facilities for placement in specialty areas such as obstetrics and medical/surgical.

Another very key point to understand is accreditation. Obtaining a Bachelor's of Science nursing degree from programs with **national professional nursing accreditation** ensures a seamless transition into graduate nursing programs and ensures quality and integrity of the program. **100% of BSN programs in MI are nationally accredited, and only HALF of the current ADN nursing programs offered in MI are nationally accredited.** National professional nursing accreditation bodies are recognized by the US Secretary of Education. Would community colleges offer unaccredited BSN programs and thereby limit the future ability of those students wishing to attend graduate nursing education programs? The two national nursing accrediting are NOT the same as REGIONAL, institutional, or technical accreditation. Regional accreditation is a nongovernmental process conducted by representatives of postsecondary institutions and

professional groups and focuses upon the quality and integrity of the total institution. The Higher Learning Association, North Central Association is a regional accreditation body. National nursing accreditation is a professional or specialized accreditation concerned only with programs of study in nursing. National nursing accreditation bodies provide standards to evaluation the quality and integrity of nursing programs. Examples of these standards can be described by the recent CCNE reaccreditation visit at Siena Heights University. SHU's baccalaureate nursing program was evaluated against standards of mission effectiveness, governance, resources, outcomes of faculty members and learning/practice outcomes of students and graduates. I am very proud that the Siena Heights Nursing program is accredited by CCNE.

As a resident of Ohio, I am very familiar with a case where an institution lost national nursing accreditation. In Ohio, every nursing program must earn a national nursing accreditation. Owens Community College in Toledo, OH, had a change in administration of both the nursing program and the overall institution. The new administration saw opportunity to greatly increase student enrollment in the nursing program. Growth occurred too quickly, without maintaining quality and integrity of the nursing program. Too few qualified faculty and inadequate numbers of clinical facilities caused the program to decrease substantially in student success in the classroom and on national licensure examination. Owens Community College lost national nursing accreditation in 2009. Students filed a lawsuit against Owens Community a former dean was called out of retirement and four years later the nursing program earned re-accreditation from ACEN.

As a Director who started a BSN program in 2007, I can describe the process to achieve national nursing accreditation. **First**, a Needs Assessment must be completed by the institution to prove the program should be created. An Internal Needs Assessment should evaluate if resources are present in the institution to support a change or new program. Areas to assess for fiscal resources, personnel, technology, and space include the following: Registrar, Admissions, Advising, Financial Aid, supporting faculty and courses, offices classrooms, and computing needs. The Board of Trustees must demonstrate support. An External Need Assessment should include survey research and/or focus groups to evaluate the actual need for another program in the community in general and the health care community in specific. **Second**, The Michigan Board of Nursing must initially approve a proposal for a new program in nursing. **Third**: The Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association, the regional accreditation body for the institution, must be notified and a "Change Request" document must be completed. Depending upon the degree of change needed, a site evaluation may or may not be required. An approval must be received from HLC-NCA before any new program can be initiated. **Fourth**: A national nursing accreditation body – either ACEN or CCNE – must be sent an Initial Proposal and timed for a Site Evaluation. Any BSN program must be accredited for any graduate of said BSN program to be admitted to any graduate program in nursing. National nursing accreditation means that four standards are met or exceeded in nursing education. I started at Siena Heights University in August, 2007 – working within the timeframes of all agencies described above to complete these four steps - two years and over \$20,000 in fees alone. Just last week, Siena Heights Nursing

welcomed three national nurse leaders to our campus for on-site intensive reaccreditation evaluation. Siena Heights' Nursing faculty, students, and alumni were evaluated on meeting or not meeting the Four CCNE Standards of Nursing Accreditation across the last five years. While our outcomes were positive, for purposes of this testimony I totaled SHUs costs of national nursing accreditation. Fees alone total \$20,000; costs of required meetings, site visit expenses, and other costs totaled another \$10,000. Program approval and accreditation are time consuming due to the high standards that must be proven and met.

Any new RN to BSN nursing program created by a community college would not have oversight by the state or by the Michigan Board of Nursing, as the Board of Nursing only approves and evaluates pre-licensure, or programs creating new to practice nurses. **The only oversight for an RN to BSN program is a national nursing accreditation body.**

In closing, Michigan's public and private Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs have an excellent and long history of collaboration with our community colleges and hospitals, and remain committed to educating the state's nursing workforce to meet nursing needs. For example, Siena Heights' RN to BSN degree completion program has a solid collaboration with Jackson Community College, Monroe County Community College, and Washtenaw Community College and in addition, we have an affiliation agreement with Mercy Memorial Hospital. Other examples of articulation agreements include; Ferris State University, which has articulation agreements with 12 community colleges and offers a BSN completion program on-line. University of Detroit-Mercy has over 250 students currently enrolled in their RN to BSN completion program both on campus and on-line, and has several affiliation agreements with hospitals, in addition to 5 community colleges. Other examples include Michigan State, Western, Wayne State, U of M-Flint, and Grand Valley State, Madonna, Davenport, and Andrews University, all which have RN to BSN completion programs, most offered on-line and are currently under capacity and have several affiliation agreements with community colleges and hospital systems across the state. These are just examples of the many articulation agreements throughout the state.

I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. The Michigan Association of Colleges of Nursing Deans and Directors believe investing in Michigan's existing infrastructure and our nationally accredited four-year nursing programs is the most sensible and cost-effective measure to increase the number of bachelor prepared nurses in the workforce. All of our state's nursing programs are committed to educating highly trained nurses to provide quality and safe patient care. We are hopeful the legislature will continue to support community colleges, independent and private colleges and universities alike, so we can continue to meet the critical need for additional nurses and nurse faculty in Michigan. Thank you.

